
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 15/08/2020 1:51:02 p.m.
To: Feedback Aurora Plan [feedbackauroraplan@comcom.govt.nz]
Subject: Re: Cancellation of Wanaka and Queenstown Aurora consultation meetings due to COVID-19

Thanks for the update John.

I think you are getting a very accurate picture of the dissatisfaction and lack of trust in Aurora within the community. Increased power costs will impact on the entire community.

Unfortunately I did not get back to Cromwell in time to attend the drop in event so thought it appropriate to put my thoughts / views as a consumer in writing and submit as feedback.

Feedback on the Commerce Commission's initial assessment of Aurora's proposal:

It is clear that the cost of this line company's poor management and underinvestment in its power supply assets is going to have to be carried by consumers rather than shareholders. On this basis my preference is for prices to rise immediately to have the network upgraded as soon as possible and thus reduce safety risks and supply disruptions.

I am concerned the Aurora has inadequate asset data to make a five-year estimate of capital spending needed to bring the network up to standard. Would like to see a firm figure established with onus on the company and / or its shareholders to perform to the projected figures or face significant penalties. Unclear if the Commerce Commission has the power to request shareholders to guarantee Aurora's performance but if possible, this should be a requirement. Very concerned that Aurora management is capable of controlling costs and restrict shareholder dividends in order to meet the necessary upgrades.

Appreciate there will be planned power cuts while the network is upgraded, and while not desirable, a necessary event. These should be well advertised and at times that present the least inconvenience for consumers. There should be sufficient planning to ensure advised timings are met and not exceeded or changed at short notice. Best times in my view would be 11am to 3pm or 12pm to 3 pm.

Unplanned Power cuts: Preference is to pay more for less frequent unplanned cuts. Email is my preferred medium for receiving notice of unplanned outages along with accurate complete by times. Better to over-deliver when calculating complete by times.

Strongly oppose any increase in unplanned power cuts and any compensation to consumers should be set by an independent party (i.e. Commerce Commission) with an appropriate fixed rate to households (adjusted via power accounts) and on a justified claim basis by businesses whose costs would be greater than households.

I have very little confidence in Aurora management given its owners will have an agenda that does not necessarily fit in with good customer service. As they are not in a competitive situation then as history has shown I expect the company will continue to pursue its own agenda's ahead of consumer interests and continue to get away with it. I believe the capital spending targets should be closely monitored by the Commerce Commission with quarterly updates to consumers via their power accounts. The lack of accountability of the company or its owners is a major concern and now the position has deteriorated to the degree where safety and supply are compromised, there remains no accountability.

I have lost my job as a result of a Covid driven business restructure, however unlike many others in NZ have been lucky enough to obtain a short-term extension until Dec 2020. I expect I will cope with the increases but I have a very real concern that non-discretionary costs / essential costs (power supply being one of these), appear to be increasing at a faster rate than incomes, particularly where job losses are prevalent as a result of Covid. As an essential service provider with a monopoly I believe much greater surveillance should have been exercised to prevent the current situation occurring and have seen nothing to convince me this situation will change.

On Wed, Aug 12, 2020 at 9:06 AM Feedback Aurora Plan <feedbackauroraplan@comcom.govt.nz> wrote:

Good morning,

We regret to inform you that we have decided to cancel today's consultation meetings in Wanaka and tomorrow's meetings in Queenstown due to last night's COVID-19 developments.

We have made this decision due to not being able to predict the number of attendees to our open public drop-in sessions and the requirements to organise social distancing and face masks at short notice. We also want to give our Auckland-based staff the time to return home as soon as possible.

We apologise to those of you have travelled or taken time off work to attend our sessions.

We have found it extremely valuable to be in Dunedin and Central Otago over the past week, hearing directly from affected communities about their concerns. We are sorry that we are not able to complete our remaining sessions at this time.

We really want to hear the views of communities in Wanaka and Queenstown Lakes and we are exploring holding online sessions as an alternative. We will be back in touch to confirm details shortly.

Kind regards,

John



John Crawford

Associate Commissioner

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